THE WOMEN'S
NATIONAL
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SHALL WE MAKE A

Soldier of the Indian?

BY

MRS. HANNAH J. BAILEY.

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SHALL WE

Make a Soldier of the Indian?

Written for and read at the Annual Convention of the Women's National Indian Association, November 18, 1891,

BY MRS. HANNAH J. BAILEY.

Barbarism and warfare are synonymous terms. The discoverers of America found the natives a warlike people. Instead of seeking to induce them to barter their warfare for civilization, the early settlers incited them to greater conflicts, and the genesis of our country was one of shameful bloodshed. As in the opinion of mankind the murderer is most condemned who takes the life of some demented child, little able to protect himself, so in God's sight, those people are most condemned who war upon poor, benighted tribes which have never heard of the Prince of Peace.

That the Indians were capable of entering into relations higher than military ones with their white neighbors was manifested by their treaty with William Penn, concerning which Voltaire said, "That was the only treaty never sworn to and never broken." Notwithstanding the fact that George Popham brought to his colony one of the Indians that Waymouth had kidnaped and taken to England, the natives flocked about Fort

Saint George, asking for knowledge of the true God that they might make Him their own.

As time wore on the white men continued to give their red brother a stone when he asked for bread. As churches began to be erected the preachers kept powder in their pulpits, so that when the Indians neared the church, they might close the Bible, take from under it the murderous powder, and go out to murder these people created in God's image. We wonder what the simple-minded savage thought of a people who would sing,

"A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;"

and then erect a fort for the war-god that he really worshiped in common with the savage, before building a church for the God that he claimed was all-powerful. As century succeeded century, the white man kept the Indian still busy at his old trade of war, instead of attempting to teach him other and better occupations. There were great wars at first, for the Indians were numerous, and great issues were at hand. In his defeat the Indian saw the downfall of his home, his liberty, his nation. But the white men gradually increasing, and constantly strengthened by numbers of emigrants from the Old World, in time, outnumbered the Indians. Then the great wars ceased, for it takes two great armies to make a great war, and here there was but one. Moreover, the white man had appropriated all that belonged to the red man, and wherefore should he continue further? However, the former seemed determined that the Indian should continue to fight as long as he continued to exist; and now the white man, the personification of the United States Government, paces the floor of Congress, and says, "What sport is there to be found with those red men whom we have driven to the little corners of our land?" Then he stamps his foot upon them, and if they seek to escape or to offer a complaint, he places

the trumpet to his lips and shouts to the whole world, "Were there ever such savages?"

Thus, while playing the schoolboy who tramples upon every lady-bug which he sees because it is red, the Government of this great country asks this question, "Shall we make a soldier of the Indian?" The white man has ever used all his power to fight the Indian, and now he would have the Indian fight his battles for him. Considering our past, we should naturally expect that the first order to the enlisted red man would be one that would send him to murder his own brothers.

It is the duty of our nation to civilize and Christianize the Indian. If this can be done by making him a soldier, the question under consideration is perfectly legitimate.

But does it convert the savage into the really civilized being to make him a soldier? Reason would seem to answer, By no means. To make an Indian a soldier is to retard his civilization. The white man has been living four hundred years among red men, and has withheld from them the torch of knowledge, and now at this late day when the white man is founding institutions of learning neither he, nor the red man, has time to waste on the study of war. The Indian will be compelled to burn the midnight oil in order to secure and cultivate an intellect which should have passed down to him by heredity for the last four hundred years.

To make a soldier of the Indian would retard his civilization, by turning aside energies which should be spent on manual labor. To make best soldiers of the Indians we should begin with the children, teaching them to have their little sham battles in the government schools. The training should be continued with the youth, and as government allows those who show great native ability to be educated in the high schools, it would prefer to send them to its military academies

rather than to the technical or the purely literary institutions.

To make a soldier of the Indian would take him away from his family and place his wife and children in danger. The homes of the United States, from Maine to California, are safe from even the threatening of war; but if there are any women in the world who need the protection of native fathers and husbands, they are the Indian women. Is it not then a crime to call their natural guardians from the post of duty where God has placed them, and to station them where there is not even need of a dummy soldier?

Let our people go to the red man with flour and not with powder; with knife and fork and not with sword and gun; with the fire of the gospel and not the fire of artillery. Our civilization has given to the Indian alcohol and tobacco; shall it aso give him the implements of modern warfare? Our country is now in debt to the red man, yet she would make him an American citizen only for the military service he may be able to render her. America owes the red man the life of a free citizen and not the death of a soldier.

But does the Indian himself wish to be converted into a soldier? We think not, for his knowledge of American soldiers has been far from satisfactory. To military men in many cases he owes the loss of everything in the past. The agents, who frequently are his despotic rulers, are, many of them, army men, who have been given their Indian offices not because of special fitness for the work, but because of past or possible political services. Indians already see too much of the military and not enough of the civil powers of our government; and invasions among them have been frequent. They have often called for assistance but the government has turned to their cries a deaf ear.

America should commemorate the deeds of her great discoverer; yet those who go to the Columbian Exposition should, after viewing the wonders of civilization at Chicago, go further west to another Columbian Exposition. There they will see as the result of these discoveries a once powerful race reaching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, reduced to scattered, helpless groups, a despised, neglected people who, like the spider in a house, no sooner weave their home in some corner than it is swept down, and they must build elsewhere and continue to fabricate their dwellings only to see them destroyed and to be themselves driven ever farther away. How significant was the remark of the Indian who, while being exhibited in "a wild west exhibition" in Genoa, was shown the monument to Columbus and told, "This is the birthplace of the great discoverer." Mindful of the wrongs received by his race the savage, not comprehending the great gift Columbus gave to the civilized world, could only exclaim: "Heap bad for Indian!"

The military engagement at Pine Ridge, last December, has done much to interest a too indifferent public in the Indian question. Even periodicals which hitherto could hardly be induced to print a few lines in the interest of the red man, at once handled the subject without gloves, and advocated the cause of the aborigines. That battle did much to show to the world the disgraceful acts of our government towards our native Americans, though the latter paid, indeed, a great price for this advertisement of their wrongs. But with Right on the throne of the universe, and with General Morgan in the chair of the Indian Commissioner, the outlook, despite all adverse measures, is at present hopeful for red men, nor will they, in any considerable numbers, we beiieve, be found in the army of the United States.

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